

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINS, TH
SUBJECT: THAI GOVERNMENT TAKES ACTION AGAINST PRESS

1. WITHIN PAST 45 DAYS THE KRIANGSAK GOVERNMENT HAS
TAKEN ACTION AGAINST THREE MAGAZINES AND ONE NEWSPAPER,
FIRST TIME THAT KRIANGSAK GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ACTION
AGAINST ANY PRESS INSTITUTION SINCE COMING TO POWER.

2. IN EACH CASE, GOVERNMENT HAS ACTED IDENTICALLY,
REVOKING LICENSE OF EDITOR-IN-CHIEF RATHER THAN THAT OF
PAPER OR MAGAZINE ITSELF, THUS ALLOWING PUBLICATION
TO CONTINUE WITHOUT INTERRUPTION AS LONG AS NEW EDITOR
IS IN CHARGE.

3. FIRST CASE OCCURRED JUNE 30 WHEN ACTION TAKEN AGAINST
SHIN CHIEH JIT PAO, PRO-TAIWAN CHINESE-LANGUAGE DAILY
NEWSPAPER. OFFENDING ARTICLE WAS IN JUNE 20 ISSUE OF
PAPER AND INVOLVED NEWS REPORT OF RECEPTION IN BANGKOK
WHERE PICTURE OF CHIANG KAI-SHEK AND ROC FLAG HAD BEEN
PUBLICLY DISPLAYED. PRC EMBASSY PROTESTED TO MFA, AND
ACTION WAS TAKEN, WITH AUTHORITIES COMMENTING THAT
PAPER'S ACTIONS DISTORTED RTG POSITION ON CHINESE
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RELATIONS.

4. ON JULY 27 POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL MONTCHAI
PANKONGCHUEN SIGNED ORDERS REVOKING LICENSES OF EDITORS
OF THREE WEEKLY MAGAZINES, ATHIT, THAI NIKORN, AND
LOKE MAI, ALL THAI LANGUAGE. IN SO DOING, MONTCHAI SAID
THAT THE THREE HAD BEEN WARNED PREVIOUSLY ABOUT UNFAIR

ATTACKS AGAINST GOVERNMENT, CREATING PANIC AMONG PUBLIC, AND INSTIGATING PUBLIC UNREST WHICH COULD DISTURB THE PEACE OF THE PEOPLE AND AFFECT THEIR MORALE. HE SAID HE WAS ACTING IN HIS CAPACITY AS BANGKOK PRESS OFFICER UNDER REVOLUTIONARY ORDER 42 OF OCTOBER 20, 1976, AND THE PRESS ACT OF 1941.

5. ATHIT WAS CRITICIZED FOR ITS REPORTS ON THAI-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS AND ON ACCOUNT OF INVOLVEMENT OF RIGHT-WING MONK WITH ISOC CONNECTIONS IN ALLEGED ILLEGAL SMUGGLING OF AUTOMOBILES.

6. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE IN BUSINESS TIMES WEEKLY OF JULY 30, THAI NIKORN CLAIMS CIRCULATION OF 45,000; ATHIT 37,000, AND LOKE MAI 33,000 THOUGH PUBLICATIONS HERE KNOWN TO EXAGGERATE CIRCULATION FIGURES.
ABRAMOWITZ

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